

Libraries, Archives, and Museums in the Twenty-First Century

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Sociologist Andrew Abbott, known and highly regarded for his study of professions and status, looked at a profession's jurisdictional claims and what they meant for the sustainability of that profession. As he explains, "In the workplace, jurisdiction is a simple claim to control certain kinds of work."¹ Furthermore, "In claiming jurisdiction, a profession asks society to recognize structure through exclusive rights; jurisdiction has not only a culture, but also a social structure."² A question that emerges here for librarians, archivists, and museum professionals is: "What are the jurisdictional claims of their profession?" Abbott described librarianship in the United States, specifically, as a profession that claimed the jurisdiction of providing "qualitative information" to users, even while enduring public resistance to the type of information provided and, more cogently, the advances in information technology. To be sure, while Abbott described how librarians endured these challenges, he implicitly urged the profession not to be insouciant with its jurisdictional claim.

In a very real sense, the work that librarians, archivists, and museum professionals do in the twenty-first century is the provision of access to information and to historical and cultural records and artifacts—hence, qualitative information. This is expressed in the ALA's key action areas, which include "education and lifelong learning," "literacy," "equitable access to information and library services," and so forth.³ It is expressed in the "global vision" of IFLA, which is to work toward "a strong and united library field powering literate, informed, and participative societies."⁴ And it is expressed in the Society of American Archivists' vision of empowering "archivists to achieve professional excellence and foster innovation to ensure the identification, preservation, understanding, and use of records of enduring value."⁵

While policies may vary throughout the world, the consensus is that the paramount role of libraries is to provide access to information in distributed sources, while the paramount role of archives is to provide access to collected original records or records that organically emerged in the conduct of doing business or in events, functions, or activities. Museums, on the other hand, should educate, inspire, and enrich lives from the experiences of encountering objects, living populations, stories, and experts.⁶

The jurisdictional claims—à la Abbott—and the vision and goals of the library, archives, and museum professions have not changed incontrovertibly within the past decades. And, in the twenty-first century, these claims, vision, and goals by libraries, archives, and museums

have sustained themselves. However, the professions have been writhed into extending these claims, vision, and goals into new territory—in essence, new jurisdictional boundaries. (It is important to stress here that while references to libraries across the world are made in this chapter, my perspective reflects the Western perspective.)

In order to be effective, libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) in the twenty-first century must be more inclusive and participatory. In addition, they must effectively use advanced technology to engage with the community and carry out their important functions. Their users, fueled by the current and future environmental and global outlook and by societal climate, demand this.

Libraries, archives, and museums are treated as converging entities here. Convergence is driven by the digital nature of records and by the use of high technology in the work and functions of these professions. W. Boyd Rayward first addressed this convergence, when in 1998, he explained that the functional difference among libraries, archives, and museums was “a response to the exigencies of managing different kinds of collections as these have grown in size and have had to respond to the needs and interests of an ever-enlarging body of actual and prospective users. It does not reflect the needs of the individual scholar or even the member of the educated public interested in some aspect of learning or life.”⁷ He further explained, “Modern telecommunications systems now make it of little concern to the individual researcher where the record he or she wishes to access is held—library, archive, museum, commercial database vendor, or any personal or institutional location on the Internet—provided only that what is wanted is available electronically.”⁸ To be sure, as Marty described years later, “the increased use of and reliance on digital resources has increasingly blurred traditional distinctions between information organizations, prompting what many have called a ‘digital convergence’ of libraries, archives, and museums—a term that encapsulates the functional integration predicted by Rayward fifteen years ago.”⁹ This increased use of and reliance on digital resources has not only blurred traditional distinctions but blurred those boundaries that have separated staff and administration of cultural institutions from their patrons and public.

INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY LAMS

Inclusivity and LAMs

“Inclusivity” (or “inclusion”) is a complex domain, and it would be negligent not to define it here. In the United States, inclusion is often right alongside equity and diversity as in the current diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.¹⁰ It is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion in an acceptable, comprehensive manner. We look, however, at the following definition of inclusion to capture the topic of this chapter. The United Nations’ World Summit for Social Development’s description of an inclusive society, in 1995, is particularly valid today. An inclusive society is one that is

equipped with mechanisms which accommodate diversity, and facilitate/enable people’s active participation in their political, economic and social lives. As such, it over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures equal opportunities for all to achieve full potential in life, regardless of origin. Such a society fosters, at the same time, emanates from well-being of each individual, mutual trust, sense of belonging and inter-connectedness. . . . Such an inclusive society must be based on the principles of embracing—not coercing or forcing—diversity and using participatory processes that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives.¹¹

Professional statements, strategies, and practices, as well as institutional history, depict that the library profession in the United States and in much of the Western world has—arguably, more so than archives and museums—professed, practiced, and made explicit, in some way, inclusivity, as well as diversity. For example, several core expressions of the library profession, such as the Library Bill of Rights and the core value of “intellectual freedom,” have underscored the importance of providing equal access to library materials, resources, and services—and thus, to an extent, implementing inclusivity and transparency. As others in this volume have pointed out, the history of the library profession includes stories of librarians standing up against laws, policies, and regulations that counteract their core values and issues. That history also includes stories of indifference and tractability, which the profession cannot ignore.

Bold, public expressions are admirable, but where does one see their impact? And how do these expressions encourage inclusivity in the workforce? Working with an outside partner, the ALA Office for Research and Statistics and Office for Diversity conducted an analysis of the 1990 and 2000 decennial Censuses of the United States for the industry of “library” and including credentialed and noncredentialed employees. The results of the analyses demonstrated a disproportionate alignment between the profession and the US population. “The persistent lag in diversity in our LIS schools, the number of librarians and library assistants leaving the profession prematurely, the aging of racial and ethnic minority library workers, and the continued under-representation of workers with disabilities, suggests a proportionally less diverse library workforce on the horizon.”¹²

A few years later, updated data showed only a small gain in the diverse workforce. For example, in the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities working as credentialed librarians, the increase was from 11 percent in 2000 to 12 percent in 2009/2010.¹³

When the Society of American Archivists carried out its own “first truly comprehensive nationwide survey of the archives profession” in 2004, the results were markedly similar and glum.¹⁴ Only 7 percent of the archivists who responded to the “A*CENSUS,” the Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the United States, identified as nonwhite. In addressing diversity in the profession, Elizabeth Adkins, as president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in 2008, called for various initiatives, including the establishment of monetary aid to underrepresented students, such as the one established by the American Library Association—the Spectrum Scholarship Program.¹⁵ Whereas in 2008, the SAA president was calling for a monetary aid initiative to draw people of color—underrepresented groups—into the profession (and to be sure, several scholarship programs have now been created since, such as the Josephine Forman Scholarship and the Mosaic Scholarship¹⁶), the American Library Association had already established the Spectrum Scholarship Program in 1997.¹⁷ To be fair, however, the archival profession developed much later than the library profession in the United States, when the Society of American Archivists was established in 1936.¹⁸ Still, several years after the A*CENSUS, White and Gilliland stated (of modern, Western archival education), “Professional education in archival science is still constructed around a small set of traditional ideas and practices. . . . These ideas and practices are predominantly derived from those of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century Europe.” They call for a rethinking of the archival paradigm.¹⁹

Inclusion is needed in libraries, archives, and museums not just within staff and administration but in collections and resources, services, and programming. In 1994, the Bay Area Research Project (BARP) explored the use of museums among diverse racial and ethnic groups. The data they gathered made explicit significant disparities in museum participation by the groups. For example, more than 46 percent of Caucasians were frequent visitors to Bay Area

museums, while fewer than 27 percent of other racial and ethnic groups were.²⁰ Years later, in 2010, museum staff, administration, and leaders were still seeking ways to bring diversity, equity, and inclusion into the field and profession.²¹

Participatory LAMs

While the LAM professions have been addressing the issue of inclusion (e.g., diversity), the concept of a participatory organization emerged in the business literature and in organizational theory earlier.²² Researchers were already focusing on the effects of employee ownership and control on employee productivity. In 1995, Ben-Ner and Dixon, for example, described the notion of ownership and participation and the returns from them, as well as employee rights on the returns.²³ Participatory practices continued to expand dramatically across organizations.²⁴

Participatory approaches in organizational theory and business are fittingly applied in the relationship between owners and managers and their employees in the quest for business productivity. In libraries, archives, and museums, it seems fitting to apply them in the relationship between the institutions and the stakeholders and public they are designed to serve. In the LAM literature, Shilton and Srinivasan proposed, in 2007, community participation in the archival principles of appraisal, arrangement, and description. They stressed that participation from “traditionally marginalized communities will not only allow these communities to preserve empowered narratives, it will allow archivists to move towards the long-debated, and still unrealized goal of representative collections.”²⁵

According to Huvila, “The interest in users’ needs have been strongest in libraries and especially in library and information science (LIS) research,”²⁶ and this is demonstrated in collection development policies and intellectual freedom activities (for example, making the public aware of books that have been banned as well as their right of access to information). On the other hand, “in museums, the user perspective has been typically more product-oriented (exhibition and collection) and focused on measuring user satisfaction with the available offerings.” “Museums have, for some time, placed a significant emphasis on providing experiences and making exhibitions interactive, but the baseline is still that a museum has a predefined set of offerings and users can either take it or leave it.”²⁷

Two years after the publication of Huvila’s article, however, Nina Simon published the lengthy online and accessible *The Participatory Museum*, which has been read by more than 200,000 people.²⁸ Simon set out to identify a framework that would address common ways in which museum visitors feel about their museum. Visitors have expressed that: (a) cultural institutions are irrelevant to their life; (b) cultural institutions never change; (c) the authoritative voices of the institutions do not include their view or their perspective; (d) cultural institutions are not creative places where they can express themselves and contribute to history, science, and art; and (e) cultural institutions are not comfortable social places for them to talk about ideas with friends and strangers.

Furthermore, Simon provided models and examples of museums and similar cultural institutions that are already involved in participatory projects. These include *contributory* projects, *collaborative* projects, and *co-creative* projects.

For his part, Huvila proposed a participatory archive that includes “decentralized curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualization of records management.”²⁹

The premise of the participatory archive was developing and testing a concept as to how an archive could be radically aligned towards integration of and interaction with its actual and potential users and uses. . . . The notion of decentralised curation refers to harnessing knowledgeable users of archival collections to contribute in the form of new and improved descriptions, translations, summaries, and relationships to other records. Radical user orientation means following the principle of post-modern archival science that the foremost functionality of an archival system is to make the contents of an archive available.³⁰

LAMs of the Twenty-First Century—Inclusive and Participatory?

LAM scholars and researchers have given a critical gaze to their professions in the past decades. Paying particular attention to libraries, specifically public libraries, Wiegand has discussed “the tunnel vision and blind spots” in American librarianship.³¹ (It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the extent of inclusivity and participation in LAMs across the global stage.)

Wiegand posited that part of the reason for this was that the LIS research community had not embraced the application of critical theories in their work—unlike other professions and academic disciplines. He suggested at the time that the profession could gain and benefit from education, social, cultural, and intellectual historians and scholars, such as those from race and ethnic studies and gender studies. He further stated, “Our alternative—to craft a set of tunnel-visioned plans and strategies for the future that carry with them many of the systemic gendered, class, age, occupational, ethnic, and homophobic blind spots marking so much of our past—is, in my opinion, unacceptable.”³²

Raber responded to Wiegand in his “Gramscian approach to blind spots and tunnel vision.”³³ Thus, Raber analyzed how libraries act and react in a hegemonic structure. He stated, “Librarians, as intellectuals, and librarianship, as a practice, are immersed in a culture determined by the hegemony of the capitalist historic bloc. Indeed, they are a positive function in the production and reproduction of this bloc and its hegemony. Under these circumstances, it is unlikely that librarians will raise questions that critically interrogate the relations of power and knowledge that sustain capitalist hegemony.”³⁴ He further pointed out that Gramsci “would insist that the future of humanity is not absolutely determined by what came before.”³⁵

At issue here is that LAMs must be inclusive and participatory, and in order to do this, they must step out of the hegemonic structure. It is not enough to conduct national surveys and report on the results, and it is not enough to tag a proposal, calling it “participatory.” Proposals should be reified and concretized in the most meticulous and true manner. Thus, a participatory museum, for example, must be one that allows not only participation from visitors and users but *all and potential* visitors and users. An inclusive and participatory library, archive, or museum is one that goes beyond providing access to information; it is one that seeks the contribution of current and potential and traditionally neglected users and visitors in the creation of new knowledge.

Native Americans and Indigenous communities are a definitive example of a traditionally neglected population in the LAM community. McLaughlin explained that librarianship practices placed Native Americans at a distinct disadvantage in the story public libraries told.³⁶ Roy concurred, asserting that libraries, archives, and museums have been developed from the non-Indigenous gaze and worldview.³⁷ Investigating the gaze of “the other” in libraries and the library profession has been the focus of Sanford Berman in his study of cultural bias in the Library of Congress Subject Headings.³⁸ He called for the “reexamination of inherited assumptions and underlying values” deeply embedded within library practice.³⁹

Focusing on tribal archives, Neal stated,

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, as a result of the restoration movement and in an effort for greater control of the preservation and dissemination of their own history, an increasing number of tribal communities created their own repositories for the care of their historic collections. During this time, the United States witnessed an explosion of Native American's requesting access to and researching their records at numerous non-Native repositories across the nation as they worked to produce "official" documents required for federal recognition applications and litigation.⁴⁰

Neal called for a decolonizing framework for next steps in the continued movement to develop and sustain tribal archives. She suggested a framework that builds upon Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonizing research and methodology, which replaces Western ways of managing Indigenous archives with Indigenous epistemological traditional ways of knowing and stewardship.⁴¹ Others have called for archives and museums to give Indigenous people a larger role in curating collections and in determining exhibition content. Lonetree, for example, suggested that museums should speak the hard truths of colonization within exhibition spaces and recognize the trauma and unresolved grief of Native Americans.⁴²

In Australia, Battley called for a methodology in archival work and research that "centres on a strong commitment to participation by all of the communities involved to result in the co-production both of the research itself and the outcomes." The approach had contributed "not only to the development of a model of collective-memory maintenance but also to developing skills and knowledge in members of the community with regard to archival processes and possibilities."⁴³

To be sure, decolonizing LAMS should include Indigenous and marginalized groups taking ownership of some of the activities that go on inside these institutions. But in addition, as Neal pointed out, there should be a national inquiry to correct injustices across the board in a concerted, unifying way. This concerted, unifying effort must include Indigenous and marginalized groups either getting back materials about them or at minimum getting copies of them so that they can be shared within their communities.⁴⁴

As stated earlier, *in order to be effective, libraries, archives, and museums in the twenty-first century must be more inclusive and participatory. In addition, they must effectively use advanced technology to engage with the community and carry out their important functions. Their users, fueled by the current and future environmental and global outlook and by societal climate, demand this.*

At the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois, the Native North American Hall is finally seeing changes. Little had changed in the hall since the 1950s, even though Chicago has the ninth-largest Native American population in the United States.⁴⁵ The Native North American Hall's exhibits featured faceless mannequins with headdresses and moccasins, spearheads, beadwork, and so forth encased in glass. It was only in 2018 that the museum announced a three-year renovation of the hall. This time, Indigenous voices would participate in the selection and curation.⁴⁶

The SAA were similarly slow to act in embracing the participatory nature of archives. The *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* was the outcome of much work by Native American and non-Native American archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians, and anthropologists, and when it was presented to the SAA, it failed to endorse it. The *Protocols* were already endorsed by the National Conference of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums—the predecessor of the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM)—in 2007. Presented to SAA in 2008, the *Protocols* identified "best professional practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival material held by

non-tribal organizations.” They focused on “human rights themes, such as understanding Native American values and perspectives and providing contexts for Native American archival materials.”⁴⁷

Rather than endorsing the *Protocols*, SAA chose to have a dialogue about it year after year until 2011, when it stopped adding it to its meeting agenda. Meanwhile, other groups began changing their policies. They included the National Anthropological Archives, the National Museum of the American Indian, and even the American Philosophical Society Library.

Outspoken members of SAA were dismal in regard to letting Native Americans have a voice in the treatment of materials that were about them or materials that had been taken from them. For example, they claimed that following the *Protocols* would be onerous and costly.

The *Protocols* provided guidelines that were participatory and inclusive. They called for the recognition of “the importance of consultation with and concurrence of tribal communities in decisions and policies,” “the need to consider copying, sharing, and/or repatriation of certain materials,” and “the role of intellectual and cultural property rights,” and so on.⁴⁸ It was not until 2018 that the SAA apologized and finally endorsed it.

The inclusion of African American materials in LAMs has been dim, as well. For example, there is much discussion now about the lack of children of color represented in children’s books.⁴⁹ And, as pointed out earlier, there is a lack of diversity in the LAM professions.

In 1985, Goggin pointed out that “until very recently White libraries and archives generally showed no interest in collecting primary source materials that dealt specifically with black culture.”⁵⁰ For a long time, archives and libraries, particularly in the South, were collecting Black materials, but the materials did not adequately reflect Black culture. There are—and it should be acknowledged—valuable materials available now in the Library of Congress, due to the far-reaching endeavor of African American historian Carter G. Woodson. The collection consists of six linear feet—5,000 items—that have been microfilmed and made available.⁵¹ On the other hand, there are many archives that have hidden Black collections and materials.

CONCLUSION

As stated earlier, the United Nations’ World Summit for Social Development’s description of an inclusive society, in 1995, is particularly valid today. For LAMs to be inclusive (and participatory), they have to equip the diverse members of their community with mechanisms that facilitate and enable their active participation in their political, economic, and social lives. They must foster the well-being of individuals, mutual trust, and a sense of belonging. With advanced technology, LAMs can do this.

The use of technology in LAMs has facilitated their participatory and inclusive nature. Scott provided an apt definition of technology for an organization theory audience claiming that it is “the means, activities, and knowledge used to transform materials into organization outputs.”⁵² Salvatore explained that “this definition of technology in organization theory makes the point that ultimately technology is only as useful as the manner in which it fulfills the functions of and activities and processes in the institution or organization.”⁵³

A *participatory and inclusive* LAM that uses *advanced technology to engage with the community and carry out their important functions* is the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research (CNAIR) of the American Philosophical Society (APS). “Since its founding in 2014, CNAIR has worked directly with over 80 Indigenous communities and nations throughout North America” and, with its Digital Knowledge Sharing approach, continues to work “with

community-based scholars, knowledge keepers, teachers, and tribal organizations to reconnect collections to communities in innovative and collaborative ways.”⁵⁴

The CNAIR has collaborated with Indigenous communities focusing on:

- “Enhancing access by providing digital copies of APS materials to cultural centers, archives, language programs, and schools to support initiatives that are community priorities.
- Cultivating collaborative relationships with communities to co-steward APS collections, based upon [their] shared values for preserving the knowledge of the past for the sake of benefiting future generations.
- Seeking guidance on ways to represent the content of the collections in more accurate, appropriate, and meaningful ways.
- Protecting culturally sensitive information through the APS’s *Protocols for the Treatment of Indigenous Materials* and guidance from communities of origin.”⁵⁵

The CNAIR based its *Protocols for the Treatment of Indigenous Materials* on the *Protocols for Native American Archival Collections*. Just as compelling, the CNAIR developed—again with guidance from Indigenous communities—an *Indigenous Subject Guide* for its collections.

The Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC) is adding to the inclusivity of LAMs. The BMRC was initiated in 2006 to discuss and find ways to support African American studies in the Chicago area. While itself not a library, archive, or museum, it is a collaboration of libraries, archives, and museums in the Chicago area that seeks to make previously “hidden” collections about the Black experience and Black culture and history available for researchers, scholars, and artists. Furthermore, it provides web-based research tools for accessing the records and collections.⁵⁶ Finally, it embraces a participatory nature by inviting the Black community, through a “community needs and asset assessment,” to make known their archiving needs.

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